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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A2384 ~ Haman Hates Mordecai.

Welcome to Bible Adventures. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow. Jesus is Lord of all.

In today's *Bible Adventure*, disaster comes to the remaining Jewish exiles who were still living in the Persian Empire.

Some years after Esther had been made Queen of the Persian Empire, King Xerxes made a big change in his court management. The king had seven advisors who knew all the Persian laws and customs, and he always asked their advice. They met with the king regularly and all held the highest positions in the empire. But Xerxes promoted a man, called Haman, over all the other nobles, making him the most powerful official in the empire. All the other officials were to kneel down before Haman to show him respect whenever he passed by, for that's what the king had commanded them to do.

But Mordecai the Jew refused to kneel down or show Haman any respect as a fellow man. The other officials nearby asked him day after day why he refused to comply with the king's order. But Mordecai didn't give them any reason. The other officials thought this was wrong of Mordecai and made trouble for him by asking Haman just how long he would tolerate Mordecai's disobedience. They also indicated to Haman that Mordecai was a Jew. Haman became so filled with rage that he made up a plan to get rid of not just Mordecai but all of the Jews in the Persian Empire as well.

Haman planned to destroy all the Jews in Xerxes' kingdom on just a single day. He and his advisors selected the day by casting lots so it was deemed that all Jews would be killed 11 months away. This would give Haman plenty of time to make all the necessary arrangements for their slaughter. But it also gave the Lord the same amount of time to carry out His plan to save His people. Once again, we see the Lord's hand in everything; for it is God alone who controls the fall of casting lots and it was He alone, who was determining the real fate of the Jews.

After the day for the Jewish slaughter was set, Haman went to the king with his plan. Without referring to the Jews by name, Haman told the king that there were certain people in his kingdom who held fast to their own separate customs, which was true, but they didn't obey the king either (which was false). Haman urged the king to issue a decree to destroy them all. Yet if this people group had been so troublesome, why hadn't the king himself noticed or at least his other governors? To persuade the king to agree, Haman offered to provide 340 metric tons of weight in silver out of his own private fortune to pay the men who would carry out the killings. Thus, Xerxes wouldn't have to pay anything out of the royal treasury.

Why did Xerxes choose a man with such an evil heart to be promoted to such a high position in the land? Maybe Haman had presented himself differently when in the company of the king? And his anger towards Mordecai's defiance had taken over his reasonable rationing and use of power in taking revenge? No doubt, though, Haman had worked out how much money he would receive back from the plunder of all the possessions of the dead Jews. But the king told Haman to keep his money and he gave Haman his signet ring off his hand to allow Haman to claim the king's authority for this decree. By giving Haman authority to go ahead with his plan to destroy the Jews, Xerxes had unknowingly placed his own queen under the sentence of death.

No matter which way you examine Haman, he'd become a wicked man. Promote him and he became proud; ignore him and he became angry, desiring to take his anger out on a whole race of people; make him rich and he used his money to destroy and not to build up others. Everything about Haman was hateful to the Lord but God didn't interfere with Haman's evil plans at that point. Haman's sins would ultimately destroy him, however, and God would bring about good for the Jewish exiles.

Haman sent a decree that he had worded himself to all the highest officials, governors and nobles of the empire's provinces. Messengers were also sent into all the empire, giving the people the order that Jewish people of all ages must be killed on a set day of the next year. The property of the dead Jews was to be given to those who'd killed them. The people living in the capital Susa, where many Jews lived, were scared and confused by the decree. Why had God permitted such an evil plot to emerge? The fact that God permits evil in this world doesn't mean that evil is good or that God is unconcerned or unable to help. Even when people don't allow Him to rule as Lord over all, at the right time God overrules and always accomplishes His purposes.

Mordecai, as a palace official, soon learnt about Haman's plan. Since he himself had been the cause of Haman's anger against the Jews, he must have felt terribly grieved at the situation. As per the usual Jewish custom, he expressed his grief by tearing his clothes and putting on sackcloth and ashes. All other Jews in the provinces did the same. When Esther's servants noticed Mordecai's behaviour, they told her about it. She was very upset and sent Mordecai some new clothes, but he refused to wear them. No one was allowed to enter the king's gate in mourning clothes, yet Esther wanted him to come to see her. So Esther sent one of her trusted attendants to speak with Mordecai to find out what was troubling him.

Mordecai told Hathach, the attendant, what had happened and the amount of money Haman had promised to pay the king. Mordecai even gave Hathach a copy of the slaughter decree to pass onto Esther.

Mordecai asked that Esther go to the king and beg for his mercy, pleading on behalf of her people. Hathach returned to Esther with the news. She sent him back with a message reminding him of the court's rules: anyone who appeared in the king's inner court without being invited was doomed to die, unless the king held out his sceptre to the uninvited guest and gave them a pardon. Esther said the king hadn't called for her during the past 30 days. She didn't actually refuse to do what Mordecai wanted her to do, but clearly, she put her own welfare ahead of the thousands of Jews doomed to die throughout the kingdom.

The faithful attendant relayed all this to Mordecai. He sent back a warning to Esther: "Don't think for a moment that because you're in the palace you will escape when all the other Jews are killed. If you keep quiet at a time like this, deliverance and relief for the Jews will arise from some other place, but you and your relatives will die. Who knows if perhaps you were made queen for such a time as this?"

For a final time, Hathach returned to Mordecai with Esther's reply. She asked him to gather together all the Jews living in Susa and fast for her for three days and three nights. She and her maids would do the same. Then, even though it was against the law, she would go and see the king. She finished by saying: "If I must die, I must die." Mordecai went away to tell the Jewish people to fast for her. Did the people now regret not returning to Judah when King Cyrus had given them permission to do so previously?

Mordecai knew the Old Testament Scriptures and that the prophesied Messiah hadn't yet come. He had faith that God would protect the Jews until God's purpose for the Messiah had come to pass. No one could have foreseen that Haman would rise to power and threaten to destroy the Jews. But God certainly knew it and arranged for Esther beforehand to help His people and be their means of deliverance. Esther then realised why she'd become queen over all the others. She could still refuse to save her people and refuse to do God's will in the matter. But if she did, she'd still lose her life. And this same is true for all of us who've been called by God to do a particular task. We are free to refuse but if we do, we will forfeit many blessings God has in store for us.

But God's sovereign purposes will always be accomplished. He uses people who fail at times, but God's purposes never will. Sometimes God will choose to promote His human instruments, like He did with Esther. At other times, He may choose to demote them, like He did in Joseph's case when a slave in an Egyptian prison. Whether we are cast down or lifted up, we need to understand that God is working out His eternal purposes through us, and in understanding this, we can rejoice that God's goodness will prevail and that He deserves all the glory that is due to Him.

Was there a reason why Mordecai refused to bow down to Haman? After all, if he'd done so, the crisis would never have occurred. It's time to take a history lesson. One of Esau's grandsons was named Amalek. He founded a nation known as the Amalekites, who lived in the desert region between Egypt and Canaan. These people were nomads, moving from place to place and plundering anyone who came their way.

When God brought the Children of Israel out of Egypt while taking them to the Promised Land of Canaan, the Amalekite soldiers treated the Jews cruelly. The soldiers attacked the rear end of the column of weary travellers, which was usually the elderly, as well as the women and children lagging behind the rest. In Exodus, Chapter 17, Moses told Joshua to select some men to go out and fight the Amalekite army the next day. Moses stood at the top of a nearby hill and held up the staff of God in his hand. The Israelites had the advantage in the fight while Moses held up the staff in the air, but whenever his arms got tired and dropped to his sides, the Amalekites started to win. So Aaron and Hur, Moses's helpers, sat Moses down on a stone and held up his hands for him until sunset. As a result, Joshua's men overwhelmed the Amalekite army at that time.

The Amalekites had no fear of God and God had pronounced a death sentence on them, to be carried out when the Israelites had settled down in Canaan. Over the years, the Amalekites joined forces with other nations at various times to attack the Israelites and to take their food supplies. In 1st Samuel, Chapter 15, God told the first king of Israel, Saul, to wipe out the whole tribe. Saul didn't do that. Some escaped and in following generations, the Amalekites continued to harass and plunder the Israelites for hundreds of years. Haman was a descendant of King Agag of the Amalekites, and as it rightly says in the book of Esther, Chapter 3, Verse 10, Haman was an enemy of the Jews. By obeying the command of King Xerxes and bowing to Haman, Mordecai would have been betraying his allegiance to the King of Kings, the God of the Jewish people.

The Amalekites' hatred of the Jews and their repeated attempts to destroy God's people led to their ultimate doom. The Amalekites' fate should be a warning to all who attempt to ruin God's plan or who wish to curse whom God has blessed. In Numbers, Chapter 24, Verse 9b, it says: "Blessed is everyone who blesses you, O Israel, and cursed is everyone who curses you." God hasn't finished His dealings with the Jewish people yet. Just as in Esther's time, no one can utterly destroy the Jews because God won't allow it. In recent years, even though there have been many threats of total destruction made against Israel, the Bible warns that those political leaders, who are making these threats, need to remember what happened to those who tried to do the same in the book of Esther.

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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